

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Watertown School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

**Team Members:** Chris Sargent, Barb Boltjes, Rita Pettigrew, Vicki Bantam, Linda Shirley, Education Specialists, and Dan Rounds, Transition Liaison Project

**Dates of On Site Visit:** December 3, 4 and 5, 2002

**Date of Report:** December 6, 2002

---

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

---

<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
--

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Referral handbook
- Child find releases
- Family education rights and privacy release
- Child find articles

- Screening articles
- Referral log
- Private school correspondence
- Table A, general district information
- Screening list 1998-2002
- Birth-3 screening a disposition data

### **Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded the district has taken a proactive role in the prevention of behaviors that may lead to suspension and expulsion.

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district administration and supervision insures that federal and state regulations are being implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability, as demonstrated with policies, procedures and documentation.

### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee concluded that staff and parents perceive there are not adequate pre-referral intervention options available.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practice**

Based upon the data reviewed, the steering committee determined the district has taken a proactive role in the prevention of behaviors that may lead to suspensions and expulsions.

The Boys Town Model is used school wide for all classes in the Watertown District.

Every teacher, paraprofessional, cook, bus driver and other employees have had training in the Boys Town Model. Office referrals in one school decreased from 300 to 25 per year. Each summer new staff is trained so there is always continuity. A committee of teachers, a social worker, and psychologist meet regularly and create incentive programs for all schools to continually emphasize the skills in the Boys Town Model. The Boys Town Model consists of the following components: Common sense parenting classes, classroom management, token and points for the behavior, self-contained classrooms, trained administrators, and consultants with advanced training.

Watertown District also offers a Student Assistance Program at all levels to track students with academic and behavior problems and provide assistance before behaviors escalate.

The Common Sense Parenting Classes are part of the district plan and well supported. In the school year 2001-2002, 85 adults attended classes. The program addresses reducing family stress, support success in school, diminish yelling and fighting, reduce child behavior problems, enrich relationships within the family, and increase parent's confidence as well as the child's. Forty-one of the parents were referred to the parenting program by the Department of Social Services (DSS), Temporary Aide to Needy Families (TANF), or the court system while forty-four of the parents attended on a volunteer basis. Adults attending Common Sense Parenting this year were parents of 176 children in the Watertown area. The parents of students on individual education program plans (IEPs) attend free of charge. The program is advertised through radio, dr. offices, internet, and district newsletters. Approximately 10 classes have been offered each year.

The Watertown district also has three classrooms for students with challenging behaviors at each level. These students use the token and points program designed through the Boys Town Model. They are very structured classrooms which meets the needs of students. The entire IEP team meets with the students and parents every 4 to 6 weeks to review progress.

The High School uses the Boys Town Reading Program (FAME) and has had great success with their students gaining up to two years in their reading abilities within a 6 month time period.

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as maintenance for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

#### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team could not validate the area of pre-referral interventions as an area in need of improvement; in fact was considered an area of promising practice. Additional information is provided under the promising practice section of Principle Three, Evaluation Procedures.

#### **Out of compliance**

24:05:17:03. Annual report of children served.

The review team was unable to validate an IEP was in effect on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2001 for 9 students who were listed on the district's 2001 child count.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Enrollment information
- Placement alternatives
- IEP file reviews
- District standards
- Child count
- Personnel data information
- Teacher surveys
- Personnel staff development activities
- Complaints
- Due process hearing
- Administrative surveys
- Goal and objective banks
- Child count
- Suspension/Expulsion data
- Disabling conditions

- Special education director's evaluation
- Student surveys

### **Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded personnel have been trained in special education procedures and SASI-XP computer program and 93% of district's staff has been training in the Girls and Boys Town Well Managed Classroom.

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district provides free appropriate public education to children with disabilities including those at risk of suspension and expulsion. The district serves students ages 3-21 in the full continuum of placement alternatives. No students have been long term suspended or expelled within the last two years.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practice**

The steering committee determined that personnel have been trained in special education procedures, student management system and 93% of district's staff has been trained in the Girls and Boys Town Well-Managed Classroom. The review team agrees with these areas of promising practices. The Boys Town Model was discussed under the promising practices of General Supervision.

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Parental right brochure
- Individual education program forms
- Individual education program front page
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Surveys
- Teacher assistance team data
- File review data
- Referral log
- Case study calendar
- Consent and prior notice forms

**Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded the district provides a variety of pre-referral strategies, resources, and programs including; but not exclusive to: the Student assistance program, Title I, At-risk kindergarten, Junior Kindergarten, Reading Recovery, Alternative education 7-12, counseling at all levels, UNITY program, summer school and mentoring.

**Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded a knowledgeable multi-disciplinary team conducts a comprehensive evaluation with parental input considered. A valid and reliable evaluation is used in developing an IEP.

**Out of compliance**

The steering committee concluded that evaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements with the exception of functional assessment. Functional assessment data needs to be included in the evaluation summary so that it can link to present levels of performance. Documentation shows that reevaluation and initial evaluations are not always completed within the timelines.

**Validation Results****Promising practice**

The district steering committee determined that the district provides a variety of pre-referral strategies, resources, and programs including; but not exclusive to: the SAP, TAT teams, Title I, At-Risk Kindergarten, Junior Kindergarten, Reading Recovery, Alternative Education 7-12, counseling at all levels, UNITY program, summer school, and mentoring.

The monitoring team found that the Watertown School District uses many strategies to assist students before the evaluation process begins. Two elementary schools have the Success Maker Program which targets reading and math. Every student is on the computer each day for 15 minutes of reading and 15 minutes of math. This program combined with the guided reading and Reading Recovery give students many possibilities for success.

The At-Risk Kindergarten is a federally funded program. Students are identified through screenings. They attend regular kindergarten in the morning and then are bused to an elementary school for afternoon class. There are twelve students in the program who concentrate on letter and number recognition along with beginning sounds and fine motor skills. They do a variety of hands on activities and repetitions.

**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meets requirement for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

**Needs improvement**

The monitoring team could not validate that reevaluations and initial evaluation timelines as an area out of compliance, however, the district may want to continue to monitoring the timelines for consistent implementation for all students with disabilities.

**Out of compliance****24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures**

A variety of assessment tools and strategies used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child to determine eligibility and program placement.

Through a review of 37 student records, the monitoring team found the district staff did not include functional information in the evaluation process by gathering, analyzing and developing a written summary of strength and needs for specific skills areas affected by the student's disability. The student's

present levels of academic performance, their progress in the general curriculum or development of annual goals and short term instructional objectives therefore did not link to evaluation. Functional assessment information is available through a variety of sources in the district; however, there is not an established process across all grade levels and disciplines for collecting, analyzing, summarizing or integrating the information into the 25 day evaluation process for all eligible students.

#### 24:05:25:06. Reevaluations.

If no additional data are needed to determine continuing eligibility, the district shall notify the parents of that determination and reasons for it and of the right of the parent to request an assessment, for purposes of services under this article, to determine continuing eligibility. The school district is not required to conduct an assessment unless requested to do so by the child's parents. However, a school district shall follow the procedures in this chapter before determining that the child is no longer a child with a disability.

Through file reviews and primarily interview at Mellette Elementary and the High School, the monitoring team found that reevaluations were being waived. Even though an evaluation team was used to determine if additional data was needed, the team did not address the need for achievement data, standardized or functional, to determine continuing eligibility and program development. Due to the reevaluation waiver, 2 students did not have transition evaluations administered prior to age 16 to assist in developing transition services and activities. The interviews also revealed that district staff was unaware that if no additional data are needed to determine continuing eligibility, notice was to be provided to parents regarding the determination and reasons for it.

### **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Family education rights and privacy
- Parental right brochure
- Access stickers
- Individual education program documents
- File reviews
- Parental prior notice of meetings

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district insures that parents receive and are aware of their parental rights.

#### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee concluded although there are policies and procedures in place, district staff show a weakness in understanding the definition of surrogate parent.

**Out of compliance**

The steering committee concluded the district has policies in place for IEE, but needs to add a maximum allowable cost section and a list of qualified evaluators. A majority of parents and students were made aware of the transfer of rights to adult students; however, documentation is not present in 17% of the files reviewed.

**Validation Results****Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meets requirement for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

**Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needs improvement for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

**Out of compliance**

The monitoring team could not validate independent education evaluation (IEE) as an area of out of compliance. The district has not had a request for an IEE for two years. A review of the districts comprehensive plan indicated appropriate policies and procedure are in place and have been approved in the event a request for an IEE is made by a parent.

The monitoring team could not validate transfer of rights to adult students as an area of non-compliance. In all files reviewed, the transfer of rights was documented appropriately one year prior to the student turning age 18.

<b>Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program</b>
---

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Individual education program documents
- Staff development data
- File reviews
- Prior notice form
- Placement alternative data table
- Disabling condition data table

**Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded the district has policies and documents available for use by all staff to guarantee an appropriate individual education program. The district shows promising practice meeting students' performance in the general curriculum and the computerized individual education program

system addresses all required components, services to children and documents that support free appropriate public education.

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate individual education program for children identified with a disability.

#### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee discussed the need for the district to document, in a student's individual education program, any special needs required by the student's parents, for example, a parent may have limited English proficiency and require an interpreter. The district consistently addresses the components of the individual education program; however, parent input was not always documented.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The monitoring team agrees areas the district is very creative in meeting the needs of the students' in the general curriculum through a variety of instructional aides, curriculum material and though a computerized IEP system which provides a data base and student information system as well as addressing all required components of the IEP.

Success Maker and the Guided Reading Program helps students succeed in the general education classroom. Elementary teachers have been hired in the summer to modify curriculum such as highlighting texts, modifying tests and outlining skills addressed in each chapter. This is especially helpful in the core areas of Social Studies and Science.

The Success Maker program is also a valuable tool for functional assessments of student's progress, and the instructors can modify this program to meet individual needs of all children with varying abilities.

The computerized IEP system used by the Watertown District is exceptional. The data in the IEPs can be sorted by annual review, three year reevaluation, grade level, alphabetical order, services, attendance center and disabling condition etc. All service providers may access the IEP and insert information needed for each child. The system is very user friendly, replicates the recommended IEP format and is being modified to adapt to the DDN campus net.

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meets requirement for independent education program as concluded by the steering committee.

#### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needs improvement for independent education program as concluded by the steering committee.

#### **Out of compliance**

24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

24:05:27:13.02. Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. For each student beginning at age 14 the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student's course of study. For each student beginning at age sixteen a statement of the needed transition services is required including interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages.



The course of study for each student is a compilation of the required courses to graduate from high school. Based upon the student's interests and individual evaluation, specific courses that are linked to the student's life planning outcomes should be discussed by the IEP team and incorporated into the individualized education program. Based upon an analysis of the individual transition evaluation, the IEP team develops present levels of performance and transition services and activities which all link to the students life planning outcomes.

Through a review of student records and interviews with district staff the monitoring team found the district needs to develop a system which provided a consistent and smooth transition planning process for students with disabilities. Inconsistencies found included the lack of transition evaluation for 2 students, life planning outcomes not developed for 1 student, present levels of performance for transition were not develop for 3 students and the course of study did not link to the life planning outcomes for 3 students. The district showed evidence of all components required in the transition planning process for students however they did not link and were not consistently reflected in the IEP process. The monitoring team would also like to note that the district promotes and has placed students into jobs within the community.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Staff development data
- Budget information
- Individual education program document
- File reviews
- Individual education program front page
- Surveys

#### **Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded the district demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting the education of students with disabilities in the least restrict environment through funding curriculum modifications, amplification systems and support personnel.

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district has policies and procedures in place so students with disabilities are served in the least restrictive environment.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The monitoring team agrees that the district demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting the education of students with disabilities in the LRE through funding curriculum modifications, amplification systems, and support personnel.

Two elementary schools have amplification systems in every classroom. There are also systems in other elementary schools and at the middle school. There is also an aid to assist with the Success Maker Program at each school. The school district hires and trains paraprofessionals to assist students in the general education classrooms. Each paraprofessional is trained in the Boys Town Model as well as the specific area in which they are assigned.

**Meets requirement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meets requirement for independent education program as concluded by the steering committee.

**Needs improvement**

Through file review and interviews with district staff the monitoring team noted instances where decisions regarding placement in the least restrictive environment were made before the students program and services were developed by the team. For example, one instance a placement statement was written in an evaluation report and in another instance modifications were determined needed because the student would be in the learning center. When interviewing staff, they seemed to know and understand the appropriate decision making process when conducting the individual education program (IEP) meeting however, the monitoring team noted inconsistencies with how/when placement decisions regarding least restrictive environment were documented in the IEP. The monitoring team does not regard this as an out of compliance issues but recommends the district regard this as a training issue to be discussed with special education staff.